

Covering 50 Miles of trail, from Cincinnati to Greene County



Adopt-a-Trail

Trail Adopter's Guide

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Thank You!

Thank you for adopting a trail segment of the Little Miami State Park and helping to maintain our trail system, protecting an important natural, historic and community resource in southwest Ohio. Our pioneering trail counting program estimated 760,000 trail uses in 2014, and the trail only becomes more popular. Each of the thousands of users this figure represents will be positively impacted by the work you do to keep the trail clean, friendly and safe.

The Little Miami State Park (LMSP) is part of the Little Miami Scenic Trail, 75 miles of former railroad right-of-way converted to a recreation trail which stretches from the east side of Cincinnati north all the way to Springfield. The State of Ohio purchased the abandoned rail line in the 1970s and 80s. It was paved in increments thereafter, and completed in the early 90s. The Clark County Park District leases and maintains the Clark County segment in the north. Greene County Parks & Trails does likewise for the Greene County segment. ODNR retained control of the segment stretching from Hedges Road (mile 3.3) to Newtown (mile 53.5), and this is Little Miami State Park. The southernmost 1.5 miles of trail is leased and maintained by Great Parks of Hamilton County.

The right-of-way is 66-feet wide along most of its length, and the boundaries are easily discernible along much of the trail, especially in winter when the leaves are off and boundary fence remnants are visible in the vegetation along the margins. At 50 miles long, this is certainly Ohio's skinniest state park!

The LMSP is part of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Parks & Recreation (DPR). DPR's mission is to enhance the quality of life through exceptional outdoor recreational experiences and sound resource management. *Our job is to help DPR do this.*

The Friends of the Little Miami State Park (FLMSP) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to ensure and enhance a safe and well-maintained multi-use trail as an integral part of the Little Miami River recreational corridor while protecting and enhancing the natural environment and conserving resources. We assist park management with development planning, routine maintenance, capital improvements, safety concerns, parking issues and promotions.

FLMSP was founded in 2008, after three serious accidents occurred due to poor surface conditions on wooden bridges. FLMSP raised \$11,000.00 to assist the DPR in paving 15 overpasses. Since then no similar accidents have been reported.

At the founding meeting, the Adopt-a-Trail program was also started, to assist DPR staff with regular maintenance. We've fixed many fences, bagged lots of litter and debris and cleared miles of encroaching brush. FLMSF's goal is improve the trail's maintenance from end to end.

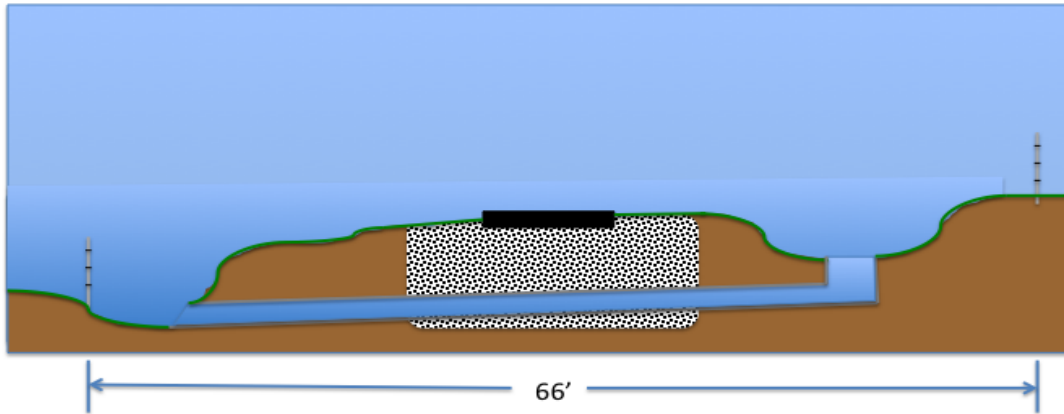
LMSP is a wonderful park, and the FLMSF is dedicated to keeping it safe and enjoyable for everyone who visits. You are a greatly appreciated Adopter and Friend of the LMSP. The Board and members of the FLMSF thank you.

The Little Miami State Park

The creation of the LMSP introduced a new concept to the Ohio state park system – a trail corridor. This new concept focuses on offering numerous recreational pursuits – bicycling, hiking, cross-country skiing, rollerblading, backpacking and horseback riding. The LMSP corridor provides access to canoeing the Little Miami River. The LMSP became a state park in 1979, is approximately 50 miles in length, runs through four counties and averages 66 feet in width.

The majority of the Little Miami Scenic Trail (LMST) is built on an old railroad bed—a rails to trails conversion project. The Little Miami Railroad was built in 1845 and ran from Xenia to Cincinnati. The history of the Little Miami Railroad can be found on the FLMSF website at , <http://www.littlemiamistatepark.org/park-and-trail/history-park-trail> .

While each adopter's segment is unique, the LMSP is typically 66' in width, representing the railroad's original right-of-way. A cross section of the right-of-way is shown below in figure A-1. Within the right-of-way is a 9' wide blacktop surface, a grass berm on each side of the pavement, drainage on each side of the rail bed, culverts of various sizes to move water under the rail bed, and usually some boundary fencing on each side of the property (See Fig. A-1). In some sections of the trail, the "poles" that carried the original railroad signal wires are visible and are slowly rotting away.



Typical cross section of the LMSP right-of-way

Figure A-1

Wood fences separate the blacktop trail from the deeper culverts and ravines to protect the trail users from falls. Bridges across larger streams were created from the original railroad bridges by adding wood planks as bridge decking. The decks proved to be dangerously slick in wet conditions and the wood planks were covered with a layer of blacktop by the FLMSP in 2009.

Trail Segment Adopter's Guide

The Adopt-a-Trail Program is a program managed by the FLMSF on behalf of the DPR to organize volunteers to become maintainers of the LMSF. The LMSF has been divided into 24 road-to-road segments. The Adopters are asked to give a few hours of time every month to help maintain their specific segment of trail. The Adopter performs routine maintenance so that DPR staff can focus their time, energy and resources on performing the heavier maintenance tasks necessary to keep the trail open.

The following section describes the rules, regulations and standard operating procedures for the Adopt-a-Trail Team. The audience for this section is the trail adopters and their helpers.

All **forms in bold print** are available on the FLMSF website under "Friends > Documents & Forms."

Authority

The FLMSF organization manages the Adopt-a-Trail program on behalf of the DPR. However, the permission for the Adopter to perform maintenance in the LMSF flows from DPR directly to the Adopter. The **Ohio State Park Individual Volunteer form** is the agreement between the DPR and the adopter, as well as any supporting volunteers. This form must be completed by the volunteer and signed by the DPR representative before that adopter can perform any maintenance work. This agreement also includes legal access to workers comp. in case of accident.

While adopters and regular volunteers are covered by a signed and recorded **Individual Volunteer form** that is valid for a year or more, community workday volunteers or others who pitch in to help adopters during trail maintenance must sign an **Ohio State Park One-Day Volunteer form**. Volunteers age 17 or younger should be listed on the **Ohio State Park One-Day Volunteer (Minor) form**, which requires the signature of a parent or guardian.

Vehicle access to the trail is authorized through a blanket **Right-of-Entry agreement** between the DPR and the FLMSF on behalf of all the adopters. This agreement allows for personnel and machinery access to the park for maintenance of the trail.

Safety

A few words about safety: Many, if not most, of the trail maintenance tasks listed below have some level of danger involved. ODNR park regulations and common sense dictate that we must always work in a manner that is safe and minimizes the chance of injury for trail adopters, their crew, and park users. Consider safety first before beginning any trail maintenance activities. The following additional rules apply:

- The volunteers cannot use power chain saws unless they have attended a State of Ohio or FLMSP sponsored Chain Saw Safety Course. See the Chainsaw Team's Guide for further information.
- Always wear appropriate clothing when maintaining the trail. This typically includes long pants, heavy shoes or boots, gloves, hearing and eye protection, and possibly more depending on the maintenance activity.
- Work along the LMST will bring Adopters into close contact with stinging and biting insects including bees, mosquitos, deer ticks¹ and dog ticks. And noxious plants like nettles and poison ivy. Dress accordingly and bring repellent if the season demands it.

State Requirements for Maintenance Activities

Maintenance activities on the trail are controlled by the **Right-of-Entry agreement**. This agreement includes permission for FLMSP volunteers to take vehicles onto the trail and dictates the rules that must be followed when working on the trail. The primary focus is the continued safety of the trail users while the trail maintenance activity is being carried out. The following are key requirements from this agreement affecting how work supporting the Adopt-a-Trail program should be carried out. [Note: the following paragraphs and associated paragraph numbers are quotes from the Right-of-Entry agreement.]

“3. The Friends of Little Miami State Park shall require all volunteers working on the project to complete required paperwork to become VIP's under the official program of the Division of Parks and Recreation prior to any participation on the project.” [This is the **Ohio State Park Volunteer** form noted above.]

“4. The removal (from the Park) of any brush or trees must first be approved by the Little Miami State Park Manager. All cutting and trimming, especially regarding trees, shall be kept to a minimum and shall improve the condition of the trail. All brush or trees cut down are to be disposed of in an area designated by the Little Miami State Park Manager.” [Contact information in

¹ Deer ticks are known to carry Lyme Disease

appendix. Note that for the Little Miami State Park trail, the Park Manager has indicated that for most activities, it is best to push the trimmings off to the side of the berm—preferably out of sight—to decompose naturally.]

- “5. The Friends of Little Miami State Park shall coordinate with the Park Manager to ensure the safety of trail users for all of the trail crossings or closings due to this Right of Entry. The Friends of Little Miami State Park shall post flag operators at spots determined by park management up and down the trail for all crossings or closings of the bikeway. The Friends of Little Miami State Park has the option of utilizing flashing lights in lieu of flag operators to accomplish the same end. All such arrangements must be made in advance with park management.” [Signs are also available.]
- “6. The Friends of Little Miami State Park shall work with park management to provide applicable signage to be used to alert the public to the trail crossing/closing activity that will be in place for the duration of the trail crossing/closing activity.”
- “8. The Friends of Little Miami State Park shall be responsible for immediately removing any debris from the trail, that may impede or otherwise create an unsafe riding condition, that has been deposited as a result of the trail work.”
- “9. The Friends of Little Miami State Park shall only use rubber wheeled vehicles to cross or travel along the bikeway, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Little Miami State Park Management.”

Adopter Tasks and Activities

The role of the trail adopter is to handle some of the manual trail maintenance tasks so that the LMSP staff can perform maintenance tasks requiring heavy equipment. The number one complaint from trail users, according to the state park managers, is uncontrolled vegetation growth along the trail. We adopters are not permitted to drive DPR tractor mowers used by DPR employees, but we can perform the labor-intensive ground tasks that would normally force the drivers to stop and get off the mowers. If we can keep the mowing efficient, DPR workers can make more passes each mowing season.

Primary tasks desired from the trail adopters are listed below in priority order by category (Safety, Functionality, Public Relations). Each of these tasks is described in the following sections.

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Safety Related:

- Clear lines of sight at road intersections
- Monitor and mark pavement issues with bright paint: sink holes, drainage issues, bumps from root encroachment or other causes, , bridge issues, etc.
- Remove branches that hang below 12 feet
- Clear the paved trail of leaves, walnuts, and other nuts and fruit in the fall
- Fix and/or report other safety issues

Trail Functionality Related:

- Clear the mowing right-of-way
- Clear vegetation around fences
- Note and report trees down
- Monitor fences for condition and need
- Reclaim the designed berm width

Administrative / Public Relations Related:

- Pick up trash
- Maintain Record of all Volunteer Service Hours (Timeslip)
- Promote FLMSF and Maintain Good Public Relations

Clear lines of sight at road intersections. Road crossings have an inherent danger to trail users. Increasing the visibility of vehicles to trail users and trail users to drivers can mitigate this danger. For this reason we work to maintain line of sight at road intersections by cutting back and removing vegetation at these intersections. We ask that the adopter monitor the road crossings and cut back any vegetation so as to maintain as much visibility as possible. Be extra cautious when working at trail / roadway intersections.

Monitor and mark pavement issues: sinkholes, drainage issues, root bumps and bumps from other causes, bridge issues, etc. The adopter should monitor their segment of trail for any of these trail failure issues. Sinkholes occur when culverts under the trail fail, causing the trail to fall in. Drainage issues can occur when culverts become blocked, or when especially heavy rains cause rivers and streams to undercut or wash out sections of trails. Drainage issues can also appear as places where water stands on the trail. These places are generally marked by mud, like bathtub rings. They not only

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betray drainage problems, but also are hazardous to trail users because they are slippery.

Bumps in the asphalt caused by roots growing under the trail can cause serious accidents to trail users – especially bicyclists and skaters. Root encroachment shows as bumps forming across the width of the trail. Report any bump over a quarter inch high as a potential safety issue.

Other causes of bumps and cracks include age, frost heaves, or bridge transitions. Bridges themselves can wear out or rot causing failure of the pavement at these locations.

Please inventory and report any of these conditions and continue to track their progress. In addition, mark the condition with orange paint as a warning to trail users. Spray paint is available in the tool sheds.



The photo shows Dirk Morgan uncovering a drain on the uphill side of the trail. Dirk checked the downhill side of the trail for the opening of the culvert, then sighted back to the uphill side and estimated the location of the drain, and then began digging there. He removed at least eight inches of sediment before reaching the stage in the photo.

Remove branches hanging lower than 12 feet from trail and berm surface:

These branches may impede emergency vehicles as they respond to trail emergencies. They may also be a hazard for horseback riders. The equipment necessary for branch removal may be obtained at your closest tool shed.

Clear the paved trail of leaves, walnuts, and other nuts and fruit in the fall.

Fall leaves covering the trail create a slip and fall danger for walkers, joggers, and bike riders. Tree nuts and fruit, branches and other harder debris hiding under in the leaves create additional risks. FLMSF periodically runs a pull-behind blower on the trail in the fall. If you notice a buildup of leaves on the trail, rake or sweep them toward the park boundary, or contact the trail adopter coordinator to arrange a pass with the blower. At minimum, kick the walnuts, branches and other safety hazards off the blacktop and out of the mowing right of way.

Fix and/or report other safety issues. Monitor and report any other safety issue you identify. Let FLMSF know how it can improve the trail.

Clear the mowing right-of-way. Like for litter removal, the goal of this task is to maximize the mowing crew's time on their mowers and minimize situations where they have to stop to manually clear the grass areas of obstacles. On each visit the Adopter should remove any branches, walnuts, bottles, cans and other obstacles from the mowing area. Remove man-made litter from the park. Push natural debris off the berm to decompose naturally.

Clear vegetation around fences. Vegetation growth around fences is not only unsightly, but also damages the fences if allowed to get out of control. Unfortunately, the only way to manage and remove this vegetation is by manual trimming. The adopter should clear vegetation in front of all fences. The adopter should clear vegetation away from Safety Fences a shoulders' width (about 3') behind the fence (assuming the topography allows this to be done safely) so future maintenance can be as simple as making a quick pass with a string-trimmer. Be careful—t there is often a steep drop-off to a rocky creek bed, with only a crumbling concrete edge to stand on. Use the pole saw to cut brush at a distance, or stand in the creek bed to work, if possible. Remove any branches that are leaning on the fence.

Clear brush at both ends of the fence in a long, slight curve away from the fence in both directions, so that the DPR tractor-mounted mower approaching along the brush-line can make an slow, easy swerve to follow the mowed edge to the fence, proceed down along the face of the fence, and then curve back to the mowed edge of the brush line past the far end.

Daub full-strength Roundup on cut stumps. This is especially true for bush honeysuckle, which will quickly regenerate if not treated.

Note and Report Trees Down. Report any trees that fall on the trail. If the tree can be removed from the trail and the mowing area safely, do so. The Adopt-a-Trail program has organized Chainsaw teams to cut and remove deadfall and other chainsaw-appropriate projects. If the deadfall is large or extensive, report the treefall and any related damage to the Adopt-a-trail Coordinator, the DPR Manager and/or the head of Chainsaw Team assigned to your section of trail to arrange removal and repair activities.

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If the adopter has training and certification, and understands and is able to follow all rules listed in the Chainsaw Team section of this guide, the adopter may form a team to remove deadfall from their segment of the trail.

Note concerning vegetation removal. It is unlawful to take firewood and timber from the park. For most Adopt-a-Trail activities, push natural debris and vegetation off the berm or to an out-of-the-way location on site to decompose naturally. In situations such as after a storm where there is an excessive amount of material and removal from the area is recommended, we can document the need and apply for a wood collection permit from the Chief of Parks. It is only through this documentation and waiver that individuals can legally remove timber or firewood from the park. State of Ohio rules about the movement of wood because of the Emerald Ash Borer may apply.

Monitor Fences for condition and need. Monitor the fences on your segment for damage. Report problems to the Adopt-a-trail Coordinator who will schedule and arrange for the Fence Repair Crew or ODNR to perform the necessary repair.

Identify any fences that are no longer necessary to protect trail users from leaving the trail and getting injured. These fences will be noted for possible removal and use in other sections of the park. Each one is a trimming headache, and besides that, we need fence material to make repairs elsewhere. Most, but not all, fences were installed to guard drop-offs into ravines or simply off the railroad levy (embankment) on which the trail is built. Others were installed to break up line-of-sight between trail users and unsightly properties. It's these that we need to scrutinize. A great deal of reclamation work has been done in this river corridor over the years, and many properties have been cleaned up. Even where this has not been the case – for example, where the same gravel pit or other industry still occupies a site along the trail – trees and brush have grown up to screen the view. Please notify FLMSP of any fences that you think should be considered for removal.

Fences are required

- Bordering all bridges

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- At culverts where the inlet (or outlet) drop is less than fifteen feet from the edge of pavement.
- On all dangerous slopes. This includes any slope greater than 2:1 within 15' of the edge of the pavement.
- Any slopes to the river where there is nothing to keep the user from entering the water, i.e. non-vegetated slope.

Fence is optional

- Where it was originally placed due to the request of the adjacent property owners. Fencing may be removed at their request or through agreement.

Reclaim previous berm width. One of the primary goals of the Adopt-a-Trail program is to restore the full usable width of the original trail corridor by eliminating encroaching vegetation. In some places, the berm has been entirely consumed and the corridor has been narrowed to the point that even the full width of the asphalt trail itself is not usable because of overhanging vegetation.

Bush honeysuckle causes the most problems, by far. It is an invasive from Eurasia and has few natural enemies to check its rampant growth. Realizing that we could not effectively combat it with volunteer labor and hand tools, we contracted for honeysuckle spraying in the fall of 2012 on the southern thirty-three miles of trail. The value was demonstrated the next spring when much of the honeysuckle on this part of the trail failed to emerge from winter dormancy. We will have the rest of the trail sprayed in the fall of 2013, and the first-sprayed length will be spot-treated again.

The role of the adopter is to do everything possible to augment the spraying program to push the encroaching vegetation back. As a general guideline, Adopters should clear to and through the ditches. Where there's an embankment, adopters should clear to the edge.

In many places along our trail, berm width has been ceded back to nature when deadfall tree limbs were simply mown around and bypassed because mowing crews didn't have time for the chainsaw work that would have been required to remove them. We can reclaim these marginal swaths by removing what's left of the deadfall, lopping any small saplings or honeysuckle at ground level, and then finish-mowing the entire area with the Kombi-motors outfitted with brush cutter heads, or the DR Field & Brush Mower. Our goal is to show the next approaching ODNR mowing crew member that they can safely mow through the area without concern for their mower blade.

One of the many secondary goals of the Adopt-a-Trail program is to remove accumulated soil and leaf litter from the paved trail edges so the entire width is again usable. Our trail is under-width by current standards, being only 9' wide, and in some areas nearly a foot has been lost to use. We will eventually arrange for large-scale edging of the trail using a vehicle with a snowplow-type blade of some kind, but adopters should feel free to remedy encroachment in small sections of trail once the primary goals have been met.

Pick up trash. The purpose of litter removal is two-fold. The first is to keep the trail as clean and inviting as possible. The second is to minimize manual labor of the state cutting crews so that they can keep their attention and their heavy equipment focused on the more formidable trail maintenance activities. FLMSPP requests that the adopter take the opportunity to remove man-made litter and trash from their segment of trail at every opportunity and dispose of it through appropriate trash removal or recycling programs. Your home trash removal/recycling is probably the most convenient. Let us know if this is a hardship.

Maintain Record of all Volunteer Service Hours. Please record all volunteer service hours provided to the Adopt-a-Trail Program on the "Record Hours" page of the FLMSPP website. Usually the primary adopter of a segment does this on behalf of all the volunteers who spend time on that segment. The total of our volunteer hours is an important measure for planning and for securing grants and large donations. Grantors and large donors want to be sure that their dollars will leverage existing volunteer efforts. Access "Record Hours" on the FLMSPP website under the "Friends" dropdown menu at the top of the home page.

Note also that volunteer time may have a tax benefit as allowed under the charitable tax benefit contributions provisions of the Internal Revenue Code. (Details on these tax benefits are available from local offices of the IRS, or find information on Publication 526 on the IRS web site, irs.gov).

Promote FLMSPP and maintain good public relations. Your presence on the trail is the best advertisement for the work of the FLMSPP organization. We are looking for opportunities to further enhance this visibility through the following means:

- Work signs have the FLMSPP name. Please use them around your work activities both for safety and to let trail users know that FLMSPP is performing the work.
- Wear your FLMSPP tee shirts.

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- Business cards with the FLMSP name and web site are available. Keep some with you to hand out to anyone who is interested.
- We take donations. Accept donations and pass on to the Adopt-a-Trail coordinator or FLMSP board member. Also note the total amount collected in the comments when you enter your volunteer hours.
- Be sure to thank any volunteers who helped on any work sessions.
- If you have a chance, take action pictures of the work crews for our website and grant applications.
- Accept new volunteers from the community that offer to help. (Have them fill out an **Ohio State Park Individual Volunteer** form.)

Author the Adopt-a-Trail “Trail Segment Owner’s Manual.” You, the adopter, will become the expert on your segment of trail as you monitor and maintain it. After the first year of working on your trail segment, we ask that you compose a short “Trail Segment Owner’s Manual.” This manual should contain a description of the special features of your segment, a list of typical maintenance activities and schedule required, and any other lessons learned. We expect these notes to be short and simple to compile so that they do not take you away from your time on the trail. Copies of this manual will go to the Adopt-a-Trail coordinator and designated officers and/or board members so that they can plan and coordinate work projects for the next year. They will also be placed on the Web site so that lessons learned are available to all the adopters.

Other Trail Issues and Recommended Solutions

Following are some additional events, activities and issues that trail adopters may confront, and appropriate responses.

Extensive Vegetation Infiltration. Contact the Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator. He/she can help recruit volunteers for group workdays by sending an email to the Adopt-a-Trail and general volunteer list.

Trail Washout and Sagging. Contact Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator and State Park Manager.

Bridge Repair. Contact Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator and State Park Manager.

Vandalism or other illegal activity. Contact Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator and Board. Notify appropriate local police or sheriff. Per the State of Ohio Volunteer Handbook, “A volunteer may not be involved in law enforcement of any kind. Volunteers are not to enforce rules or approach visitors who are violating rules,

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but should report such infractions to park staff, officers or management who are on duty.” Volunteers can take photos to enhance enforcement efforts.

Conflicts with Abutting Property Owners. Stand down. Contact the Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator and Board who will pass the concern on to the DPR Manager.

Other as identified. Contact Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator, DPR Manager and/or FLMSP Board member.

Appendices/Resources

Available Equipment

FLMSP has a variety of tools, including gas-powered brush cutters, chainsaws, a leaf blower, and a brush mower. We also have hand tools such as loppers (long-handled pruners), rakes, shovels, a mattock, and a Honeysuckle Popper. Safety vests, gloves, glasses, and earplugs are available as well.

Tool caches:

- North: Hisey Park, south of Corwin
- Mid-north: Morrow
- Mid-south: Fosters
- South: Terrace Park

Note that some of the equipment, such as the chain saws, requires training before use.

Each Trail Segment and its Adopters

- This spreadsheet is not available on our FLMSP website because it contains personal contact information for our adopters and volunteers. You may obtain the current version from your Adopt-a-Trail Section Leader or the FLMSP Volunteer Coordinator, and share it with your team of volunteers as you see fit.

State Documents and Forms

- Ohio State Parks Handbook for Volunteers:
<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Portals/21/files/pr/volunteer/manual/volunteer%20handbook.pdf>
- The following forms are available on the FLMSP Web site under Adopt-a-Trail Downloads (see access instructions below):
 - Individual Volunteer Agreement
 - Group Volunteer Agreement

Web Sites of County Maps and Property Records

- Green County
 - <http://gis.co.greene.oh.us/gismap/>

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- <http://gis.co.greene.oh.us/gismap/map.asp?K28000100220003300>
- Warren County
 - http://www.co.warren.oh.us/auditor/property_search/index.htm
 - <http://webmap.co.warren.oh.us/AuditorGIS/default.aspx>
- Clermont County
 - <http://www.clermontauditorrealestate.org/Forms/MapAdvanced.aspx>
- Hamilton County
 - <http://cagisonline.hamilton-co.org/cagisonline/index.html>

Phone Numbers of Local Government Entities

- **Little Miami State Park**
Trail Hotline: 513-212-5968
- **Ohio State Parks, Cowan Lake Region**
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911
- Warren County Sheriff
513-695-1280
- Clermont County Sheriff
513-732-2231
- Hamilton County Sheriff
513-825-2280
- Green County Sheriff
937-376-5111
- Hamilton Township Police
513-683-0583

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